

“Triggers and Spurs” of English Language Teaching at Junior High School in Yogyakarta

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Abstract

This research is aimed at describing activities used to make the students enthusiastic to participate in English learning activities. It is a descriptive qualitative study involving four English teachers from two schools that have different characteristics in terms of school management. The first school is under Ministry of National Education (MONE) and another is under Ministry of Religion Affairs (MORA). The data gained are from observation, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), in-depth interview, and documentation. The findings of this research shows that the students were more delighted in learning when the teacher implemented exciting learning activities. Teachers used activities to make the students enthusiastic to participate in English learning activities and to make them spurred in learning English. The teacher triggered the students by implementing activities such as Near Peer Role Model (NPRM), Mingling Games and Tiered. As a result, students become spurred because the social interaction is involved.

Keywords: *learning activity; spurs; triggers*

Background

Teaching English needs extra efforts from teachers. They need activities to make their teaching interesting for students in order to raise the students' motivation to learn English better. They definitely have their own way to make the students willing to participate in learning activities properly. This is understandable because teachers have different style in applying a style of teaching in the classroom and each school also has different students with different characteristics. Teachers may use certain 'triggers' to 'spur' the spirit of the students to participate in learning English. Triggers are the procurement process from the idea of having no passion at all becoming passionate in learning. Spurs are the effect of trigger such as motivated students.

Literature Review

Teaching English at Junior High School

Indonesia up to now seems to have a centralized curriculum in such decentralized governance. The education system in Indonesia certainly cannot be detached from the regulation derived from the government. The Education Minister Regulation stipulates Government Regulation No.19 Year 2005 about national education standard as the main regulation for the system of education. National education standards are the minimum criteria regarding the educational system in Indonesia.

English Teaching

Teaching English requires a lot of creativity from teachers to support the students' motivation. Perhaps in a country whose primary language is English, the activities undertaken can be understood by students, however, in a country whose primary language is not English such as Indonesia, teachers are recommended to be more creative in developing activities so that students become more motivated to learn English.

Brown (2001:275-276) proposes some principles for designing teaching activities such as techniques that cover the spectrum of learner needs, from language-based focus on accuracy to message-based focus on interaction, meaning, and fluency, providing intrinsically motivating techniques, encouraging the use of authentic language in meaningful contexts, providing appropriate feedback and correction, capitalizing on the natural link between speaking and listening, giving students opportunities to initiate oral communication and encouraging the development of speaking strategies.

Teaching Procedures

Teaching procedures takes learning steps such as Presentation, Practice, and Production (PPP). In presentation, teachers begin the lesson by setting up situation, either eliciting or modeling some language that the situation calls for. Presentation may consist of model sentences, short dialogues illustrating target items, either reading from the textbook, hearing on the tape or acting out by the teacher. In practice, students practice new language in a controlled way. They drill sentences or dialogues by repeating after the teacher or the tape, in chorus and individually, until they can say them correctly. Other activities are matching parts of sentences, completing sentences or dialogues and asking and answering questions using the target language. In production stage, students are encouraged to use the new language in a freer way both for their own purposes and meanings or in a similar context introduced by the teacher. It can be a role play, a simulation activity or a communication task (Harmer, 2007).

Classroom Management

Scott (1995) argued that teacher attitudes become important in the learning activities because respect to the students and be realistic about what they can manage at an individual level were realistic expectations from the teacher. He also proposed some classroom management setting that should be done by the teacher such as;

1. Helping the students to feel secure

Students need to know what is happening and they need to feel that you are in charge. The teacher also needs to respect to their students.

2. The physical surroundings

Students respond well to surroundings which are pleasant and familiar, for example, put as much as possible on the walls like calendars, posters, postcards, and so on.

3. Arranging the desks

Teachers make the most suitable arrangement that can make the students motivation increase.

4. Grouping the students

Teachers group students feeling not bored when learning English. Activities can be pairwork and groupwork.

5. Classroom language

Cooperation and communication is the part of the process of learning a language as well as the part of the process of growing up, then the students learn simple, meaningful expression in English, the easier it will be.

Activities to Enhance Teaching English

More intensive programs may be needed for some students. Activities are needed to support learning activities, such as:

1. Near Peer Role Models (Arao, 2001)

Near peer role models are peers' activity who are close to one's social, professional, and/or age level, and whom one may respect and admire. While growing up, many people experience watching some student or sibling just a few years older and modeling their behavior. It may be that they only respect a characteristic or an ability that the role model has, and not necessarily the whole person.

2. Tiered Task (Tomlinson, 1999:83)

Tomlinson defines tiered tasks as the activities which focus on the same essential understanding and basic skills but are differentiated in terms of the level of complexity, abstractness, and open-endedness. This kind of tasks provides the different routes to access and understand the materials by varying the degrees of difficulty. Such a way is aimed at enabling the same way they are appropriately challenged. Tomlinson also states that tiered tasks can help the students to get their ideas effectively so that the students can be responses while doing the tasks.

3. Mingling Games (Case, 2008)

Mingling Games are one of the most popular TEFL activities (Case, 2008). They are good to get students up and move around and ask questions to match people to inform that they have given, so that they loosen their inhibitions and wake them up. He also lists 15 variations of the mingling games which make students to equally involved.

These activities done by the students based on the teacher instruction that focused on while teaching (practice) step.

Methodology

Johnson (2008:48) states qualitative methods produce information only on the particular cases studied, and any more general conclusions are considered propositions. The data in this research were taken from in depth interview, observation, focus group discussion and documentation. This study covers two schools. It includes four teachers come from a state school and private school. The researcher focused on activities conducted by the teachers in the teaching and learning that seem to trigger the students to learn English.

Findings and Discussion

Case Study 1

The first location of a place of research was school that under MONE. The school is located quite strategically located in the center of the city of Yogyakarta. This school is one of the favorite schools located in Yogyakarta. The researcher came to this school, and easily got a research permit.

After arranging research agenda at the school, first research addressed to the younger teacher. The researcher is allowed to make observations at a meeting in class VII F. From the observation in the classroom, the researcher obtains the necessary information about the learning activities which he has done and from the lesson plan obtains that he used Exploration, Elaboration and Confirmation (EEC). Teacher opened the teaching learning process with greeting.

After that he did a review of previous material. He asked the students what they learned in the previous meeting then the students answered that question. From that we can understand that the teachers asked about topic/previous materials used to find out the students understanding about the previous materials. Some students answered that question in Bahasa Indonesia and some of them answered the wrong ones. This step was exploration (while teaching or practice phase) that was used by the teacher in lead the materials by asking the previous materials given because in his meeting that day he wanted to continue his materials. After that, he continued with the next activity. He used projectors and speakers when presenting the material being performed.

After that, the activity conducted in his class was drilling the material by giving some words then he asked the students to pronounce the word or phrase. Most words came from the laptop that were used a loud speaker so that the sound was loud enough for whole students, for example, the recording sound "announcement" then the students repeated to say that word. So that, the students became spur to learn because they listened to the recording and they tried to repeat that word.

From the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) the students said," *senang, asyik, tambah ilmu* (happy, fun, new knowledge)" and the students also said," *senang sekali, seru* (very happy, interesting)". It was found out that the students liked the activity. Students stated that the activities undertaken by teachers were very interesting and exciting, although sometimes they found it difficult. Students said that teachers rarely conducted the group's activity even though they liked them.

Finally, the teacher ended the lesson by recalling the material in class. The teachers said "See you next week" to end the class. He also asked," What have we learnt today?" to confirm the students knew about the materials given in this meeting. He also motivated the students that not only English native speakers could speak fluently in English but also foreigners like Indonesians

could also speak English fluently. From this case, the researcher thought that the teacher adopted the Near Peer Role Model (NPRM) activity so that the students felt motivated to learn English.

Based on the teacher lesson plan, the teacher focused the activity in exploration (while teaching) step. The teacher did not do the elaboration step in this meeting because of time limitation. The teacher taught the materials based on his own lesson plan. It was about announcement. It seems that the trigger started what the teacher said, "Please listen carefully and write down the question from the recording, after that please do the task." Before the teacher gave the question, he told the learning purpose to the students then spur started when he played recorder about announcement. After that, the step was students did the task 'comprehension question' then discussed it. In the lesson plan, the teacher wrote and gave some questions to the students and he told the purpose and language feature from that text but he did not perform these activities. The material attached in his lesson plan also used in learning activities in the classroom.

Then, further research is to the senior female teacher. She started learning activities by saying a prayer and checked the students' attendance. The second teacher was able to make the students more enthusiastic by telling jokes related to the students in her classroom so that the students became more motivated to learn. This activity generated the motivation of the students and the students became motivated in learning English. In this exploration, the teacher used tiered task activity in term of making something interesting so that the students became enthusiastic to learn English. She used projector and speakers to lead the materials. She asked the students to listen and watched the materials that given by projectors.

Then the teacher played the recording (dialogue) then the students listened and wrote some information from that dialogue. After that, the teacher repeated the dialogue three times to make the students understand more about that dialogue. Meanwhile, the information obtained from the interviews showed that the teachers and students always recalled the materials at class. For group activities, she admitted that because the activities can help students to learn well. Teacher implemented 'share information among students' (*kunjung karya*) that the students exchange the group information that makes them knew much knowledge.

From her lesson plan, she did the activity in elaboration step. Her activity in this meeting focused on listening report text. This observation conducted in her second meeting of report text material. This activity started when the teacher played a recorded report text then the students analyzed the content from this monolog text monolog report. After the students analyzed that text, the students answered the question based on the text. She also did the confirmation step in this meeting discussing the correct answer based on the text and also showed the script from the monolog recording that was done in elaboration step. She did her activity step based on her lesson plan but the researcher did not analyze deeply because in her lesson plan the researcher cannot find her material that was used in her class.

Case Study 2

The next location was private school under MONE and MORA. There are three English teachers in this school then the researcher is allowed to conduct learning observation activities conducted by two teachers. Senior teacher has been teaching about 10 years while junior teacher has been teaching about 1 year.

The first observation was held at the school to the junior teachers. He has been teaching in this school for 4 months. He taught English in grade 8. He started the lesson by praying and checking the attendance. Then, directly the teacher wrote some exercises on a whiteboard and asked the students to write and do that question. When the discussion took place, he pointed the students one by one to answer that question.

The activity of pointing the students randomly was able to make the students triggered and spurred in learning English because the students must be ready to answer the question from the teacher. They did not know when their teacher pointed at them to answer that question. After the activity was finished, he made a sudden question and pointed students in random to answer the question. The students tried to answer it differently and the students had discussion with their friends in class. This activity was adopted from Mingling Games activity that students gave their ideas to one another. Basically, students were quite noisy and paid less attention to the teacher. The teacher also contended that he used various activities such as group discussion and games.

Based on the interview with the teacher, it was found out that he liked to do discussions and games. Games make students interested in learning the material. Games are usually associated with vocabulary and are taught by using cards to make the students understand the material better. Meanwhile, based on focus group discussions with students, it was found out that the teacher sometimes did a group activity. Students found the activities interesting and they motivated them in learning English. They also noted that their teacher was quite interesting to explain the lessons. The students said, " *Enak kelompok* (more comfortable in groups activity)". He immediately closed the lesson with greetings because it was time for *Dhuhr* prayer by saying, "It's *Dhuhr* time, please go to the mosque now, *Assalamualaikum*". The students answered, " *Yes, sir wa'alaikumsalam*".

Based on his lesson plan, he showed to the researcher that his lesson plan not associated with the material that is taught in the classroom. When researchers asked the lesson plan, the teacher said that he teach was not based on the lesson plan. So, the lesson plan from the teacher did not analyze further.

The second teacher at this school was female senior teacher. She began her lesson by praying and checking student attendance. She said, "Afternoon students, *assalamualaikum*" the her students answered, "Afternoon miss, *waalaikumsalam*", She did not give any trigger in this step, she only greeted her students. After that, she wrote some exercises on white board and then asked students to write and do the task. She walked around the class to check her students' answer. After the students finished in pair discussion activity, she discussed the task together with the students. The class was quite noisy so she held a wooden stick and banged it to the table several times so that the class became quite. The next activities were drilling to say some words and then asked the students to say the words together in class. It turned out that teacher did less attractive activities to the students but when the teachers held the stick, the students became more serious to learn because they were afraid that stick. The FGD results indicated that the students were less interested in learning English. This occurred because the condition was very noisy even the teacher found it hard to control the class. Based on her lesson plan, she showed to the researcher that her lesson plan did not have relationship with the material that was taught in the classroom. When researchers asked the lesson plan, the teacher said that she taught was not based on the lesson plan. So, the lesson plan from the teacher was not analyzed further.

Data revealed that teacher adopted some activities to motivate their students to learn English. In conducting the teaching and learning, the teacher used interesting activity such as games as well as providing the teaching learning process by providing media. From this research, it can be concluded that the activities can make students motivated in learning English. The evidence from focus group discussion that teacher said that they are more interested to learn English when their teachers use interesting activities.

Conclusion

It was found out that teachers used certain activities to make trigger students in learning. In while teaching, the teacher delivered the materials by using interesting activities to motivate the students. The teachers triggered the students by adopted the activity from the NPRM, Mingling Games and Tiered Task by choosing the appropriate activity that can be conducted in the class, the students became spurred because the activity involved their social interaction so that they became more interested in learning English in the class. While teaching is the main part of this research because in this part the teacher elaborates more activity to make the students interested learning English.

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